

## Meal Count/Collection Procedure(s)

**School Food Authority:** \_\_\_\_\_

Complete the checklists in Section A to indicate procedures used in your school/district for counting meals and collecting revenues by placing a check in the applicable box. Then continue to Section B of Attachment F for detailed descriptions of the count procedures to be used at school sites. The actual procedures will be entered by site in the required profile information obtained via the School Nutrition Automated Claim System (SNACS).

### SECTION A:

1. All approved meal count/collection procedures must include a method for prepayment and/or post billing (charging). **Charging is seldom recommended.** The provision for allowing for prepayment and/or post-billing should make free and reduced-price meal recipients appear as students who pay full price or reduced. ***Check one or more of the following:***

- ☐ Students or parents can make full and reduced-price meal payments in advance in a designated area away from the cafeteria serving line on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis. Students receiving free meal benefits receive such meals in the exact same way as paying students.
- ☐ Full and reduced-price meals can be post-billed (charged). Parents are billed and may mail in payments or students or parents may pay in a designated area away from the cafeteria serving line for meals already received. Care is taken that neither the billing nor the payment identifies those who pay nothing.



2. The option of prepayment (and/or charging) of meals should be routinely publicized. This may be done by using methods such as posting signs, making public announcements, including the information in printed material, etc. Some districts offer incentives for prepayment options when cash is also accepted on the serving line. ***Check one or more of the following:***

The ability for students and/or parents to prepay (or charge) is routinely advertised:

- ☐ In the letter to parents (Notice/Letter to Households) sent home with the application at the beginning of each school year.
- ☐ In an announcement made over the school's public address system.
- ☐ In a newspaper/newsletter article.
- ☐ By a posted notice (sign) displayed in the cafeteria area.



3. The medium of exchange for free and prepaid (or post-billed) reduced and full-price meals must be identical except for the code. Color-coding by category or single-symbol coding

using obvious identifiers such as F, R and P is prohibited. ***Check one or more of the following that are used in district schools.***

Medium of exchange is coded in the following manner:

- ☐ Coding series. *Example: (Free – 1 through 1,999) (Reduced price – 2,000 through 3,999) (Full price – 4,000 and above).*
- ☐ Coding by number. *Example: Number ending in 0, an odd or even number.*
- ☐ Coding by variation. *Example: Variations in signature, placement of date or ticket distributor such as Mary Smith, Mary J. Smith and M. Smith.*
- ☐ Coding by subtle differences. *Example: Differences in printing such as capital letter, period, spacing of a line or differences in underlining.*
- ☐ Coding by number digits. *Example: 4 digits for free, 5 digits reduced-price and 6 digits for full price.*
- ☐ Coded by bar line for scanning.
- ☐ Coded number used on a keypad.



4. All approved meal count/collection procedures must include a point-of-service count by reimbursable meals by category. “At the point of service” is defined as that point in the meal service line where it can be determined that a reimbursable meal was served. To ensure that only meals meeting requirements are claimed for reimbursement, the end of the serving line is considered the “point of service”. Counts taken in the classroom, unverified morning meal counts, the number of tickets sold/issued, head counts, tray counts and counts obtained by “backing into” the numbers of meals served are **not** point-of-service counts. ***Check one of the following:***

- ☐ The cashier is stationed at the end of the serving line, determines that the meal selected is reimbursable, and counts the meal by category.
- ☐ Other. An alternate method must be individually written and pre-approved through an on-site visit by State Office staff. If a student selects a non-reimbursable meal, a system must be in place for removing that meal from the count of meals claimed for reimbursement. Please list schools approved with an alternate point-of-service meal count: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **SECTION B:**

Section B describes meal count procedures for participating schools to choose from for entry on the school/site profile information requested during the application process. The following meal count procedure codes will be provided on the application/SNACS profile document, replacing the former Application to Participate:

- A- Verbal identifier entered on a numbered sheet or daily roster
- B- Coded ticket/token presented and collected
- C- Coded ticket/token tallied mechanically and/or recorded as presented and not physically collected
- D- Automated tab cards are presented and cut for a mechanical tabulation
- E- Bar code card or roster scanned for each student and electronically counted
- F- Student or cashier enters coded number or other identifier on pad and meal is electronically counted
- G- Other state-approved procedure is used

***For example:*** Apex Elementary uses a coded ticket and the code is entered on a cash register at the point of service to obtain a meal count for lunch. At breakfast the students provide their names to a cashier and the cashier checks off the student's name on a coded roster. Thus, on the school/site profile document (formerly Application to Participate) Apex Elementary would enter: meal count procedure code "C" for lunch and "A" for breakfast. An afterschool snack program also is operated at Apex and a daily roster is used to record the names of students participating and receiving a snack each day. Again, the meal count procedure code will be "A" indicating the use of a daily roster.

5. Regardless of the procedure selected, all approved meal count/collection procedures must include a medium of exchange that is issued to students for obtaining a meal. Students receiving free meals must be issued the identical medium of exchange as those students prepaying (or charging) full or reduced price meals. The systems for coding, distributing and collecting the medium of exchange must ensure that students receiving free and reduced price meal benefits are not overtly identified. A common area and method for distributing and collecting the medium of exchange must be used for all students regardless of meal category. Students receiving free meals and those pre-paying or post-billed for full or reduced price meals will be issued:

- A verbal identifier to be used on the serving line in exchange for the meal. Numbers or student names are the most commonly used verbal identifiers.
- A coded ticket or token.
- A coded I.D. card.
- A coded automated tabulation card.
- A coded bar line card for scanning.
- A coded number for use on a keypad or an imaging reading such as a thumbprint.

6. It is understood that in addition to prepaid (or post-billed/charged) meals, some cash meals may also be sold and counted. Meals paid for in cash on the line may be counted in a different manner than those prepaid (or post-billed/charged). These meals may be tallied, counted mechanically, recorded on a cash register, etc. However the medium of exchange for students receiving free, prepaid reduced-price or prepaid full-price meals must be collected and counted in exactly the same manner.

When students receiving **free, prepaid reduced or prepaid full price** meals pass the cashier, they:

- Call out their number and the cashier strikes it from a numbered sheet. The count by category is taken from the numbered sheet.
- Call out their name and the cashier checks the name off a coded roster. The count is taken from the roster by category.
- Present a coded ticket/token and it is collected. The count is taken from the tickets/tokens.
- Present a ticket and all tickets are marked in some manner and returned to the student. Simultaneously, the count by category is tallied, mechanically recorded on a cash register, etc.
- Present an automated tab card. The card is mechanically cut and a count by category is simultaneously taken.
- Present a bar line card. The card is scanned and a count is simultaneously taken.
- Enter a personal identifier on a keypad or present finger or thumb for imaging. As an identifier is entered, a count by category is electronically recorded.



By using steps 1-6 as outlined in this Attachment, it is possible to describe most meal count/collection procedures used throughout the state. If an alternate method is used, it must be individually written. Care should be taken to include all necessary information as outlined below:

- How can meals be prepaid or charged?
- How is the system for prepayment and charging advertised?
- What medium of exchange will be issued to students receiving free or prepaid (or charged) reduced-price or full-price meals?
- How will the medium of exchange be coded?
- Where is the count by category taken? If the meals are served outside the cafeteria, counts must be verified and actual students receiving meals must be documented by name on a daily basis. Any time counts are not taken at the actual point of service in the cafeteria and at the end of the serving line, a school food service employee must be responsible for overseeing and obtaining an accurate meal count.

**An alternate method will have to be pre-approved and entered on the school/site profile as code G “other state-approved procedure is used”.** In order to use this code your alternate meal count procedures must be fully described in detail so that a State Agency visit may be scheduled if necessary to evaluate the procedure to be used. \_\_\_\_\_

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